



DHS Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov

Celebrating African American & women's history months in Macomb County

From Yvonne Brock, Manager

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I know most of you are aware that February is Black History Month and March is Women's History Month. I believe this year calls for a celebration as February 2007 began with a wonderful historic event. The two teams in the Super Bowl the

Indianapolis Colts and Chicago Bears were both coached by African Americans. As a result we all saw history being made. In Mt. Clemens our district office began our month by sharing educational information and displays of significant black Americans past and present. During the last two weeks we highlighted "Knowledge Is The Key" showcasing the rich history of African American sororities, fraternities and the United Negro College Fund (UNCF).

Our featured speaker was Leslie Andrews, development director for the Michigan office of UNCF. Andrews spoke on the rich history of UNCF past and present. She noted that seven college presidents came together with a goal to incorporate black colleges and universities. The idea was to address social and economic barriers that hampered African Americans in pursuit of a higher education.

Most are familiar with the phrase associated with UNCF: "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." This phrase is not only recognizable but it truly speaks to a fact that most people cannot dispute. Higher education has been instrumental in the rich history of America. Andrews noted that it is significant and most appropriate that there are people of all races and cultures that attend UNCF Schools. It speaks to the multicultural heritage



Mt. Clemens District's displays that accompanied the monthly celebrations.



Black History Month speaker Leslie Andrews (left) with Yvonne Brock, manager of DHS-Macomb County Mt. Clemens District.

of America and the ability to share ideas within the learning environment. I am a strong advocate of higher education as it will ensure we have a diverse, knowledgeable workforce and leaders well into the future.

It is significant that March is Women's History Month. We proudly displayed information that featured the accomplishments of the past such as Rosa Parks. You may recall Parks demonstrated extraordinary courage when she refused to give up her seat on the bus. Her courage inspired the Montgomery bus boycott. We also heralded current accomplishments such as information on the Hon. Sheila A. Miller. She was appointed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm to serve the citizens of Macomb County at 41B District Court. We were proud to highlight the contributions of African Americans in history and hope this article will inspire you to learn more about some of the topics discussed above.

In difficult times good people come together to give their time and energy to help others. I believe the people who work at DHS excel at this. In addition to their ongoing job duties the committee members noted below organized all events. Therefore I give a special thanks to **Robbin Grimes, Cassandra Thomas, Mona Lindsay, Erica Johnson, Christina Taylor, Travena Taylor, Yvonne Kidd, Cheryl Banks, Angela Cusmano, LaShanda Johnson** and **Vivian Ford**. Others may not be mentioned here but their efforts are appreciated, thanks to all that volunteered and participated in the events.

Click to read...

Star Award winners.....2

Local office stories.....2-3

Your letters.....4

DHS spotlighted first Star Award winners Feb. 27

Michigan Department of Human Services held its first “Star” Award celebration Feb. 27, presenting awards to five employees and three teams representing 44 other employees. The Star Awards were presented to employees and teams with high levels of workplace leadership, integrity, inclusion, teamwork and excellence.

Awardees included:



Larry Boitnott



Laurena Smith

- **Cathy Truss**, a performance management specialist for DHS Office of Performance Excellence in Lansing,
- **Geri Pasheek**, an administrative services manager with Genesee County DHS McCree District in Flint.
- **Larry Boitnott** a departmental manager with DHS Region 3 in Grand Rapids.
- **Laurena Smith**, a community resource coordinator with Wayne County DHS Fort Wayne District in Detroit.
- **Marc Hargis**, a disability examiner for Disability Determination Service in Kalamazoo.
- DHS Office of Child Support's **Paternity Establishment Percentage, or PEP, Team.**
- DHS **Technical Assistance Team Training Unit.**
- DHS **Weatherization Team.**

The Star Award program is an annual employee recognition program started in 2007. Award winners were nominated by peers and/or managers. For more information on Star Award winners go to DHS-Net, “Employee Information”, “Awards Programs”, “Star Awards”.

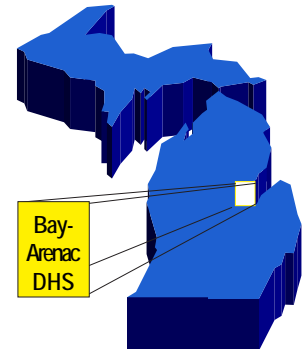
Hotel, community assists DHS and clients in Bay County

From Mary Ann Rankey, Community Resource Coordinator

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The Doubletree Hotel in Bay City has teamed up with Bay County DHS in an effort to help the needy of Bay County. In early December, Gary Mackley, CARE president for the Bay City Doubletree, contacted Bay County DHS to see if the Doubletree could donate items for the hat and mitten tree at the DHS office.



April 5 is National Alcohol Screening Day

Employee Service Program

www.michigan.gov/esp

Are you, or is someone you know, concerned that you may have a drinking problem? If so, the Employee Service Program invites you to use **National Alcohol Screening Day on Thursday, April 5** as an opportunity to obtain some answers. The screenings are free, confidential and available through the Employee Service Program. To complete a screening online, visit www.michigan.gov/esp click on Interactive Screening Program, and enter the keyword **espmi**. The telephone version of the screening is available by calling 1-800-887-5676. With either option you will receive immediate customized feedback, and the opportunity to schedule an appointment for further evaluation if you wish to do so. You are also invited to take advantage of the Employee Service Program's Online Stress Management Program, which is also located on the ESP Web site. Call the Employee Service Program Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 517-373-7630 or toll free at 800-521-1377 for questions, other information, or free confidential counseling services.

Their employees made and/or collected these hats, mittens and gloves. This was a part of their “CARE Committee” at the Doubletree. We were happy to accept these items and they have been well-received by our clients!

In January, it was the Doubletree calling again, wondering if DHS would like some alarm clocks. It seems that they were upgrading some of the rooms at the hotel and they wanted to donate the alarm clocks that were being replaced. These clocks proved to be quite nice and they even have a night light on them!

Bay County DHS gladly accepted the alarm clocks and they were taken over to the Bangor Work First program at the Bay County Michigan Works! office. They are perfect for us to give to our clients to assist them in their efforts to become self-sufficient.

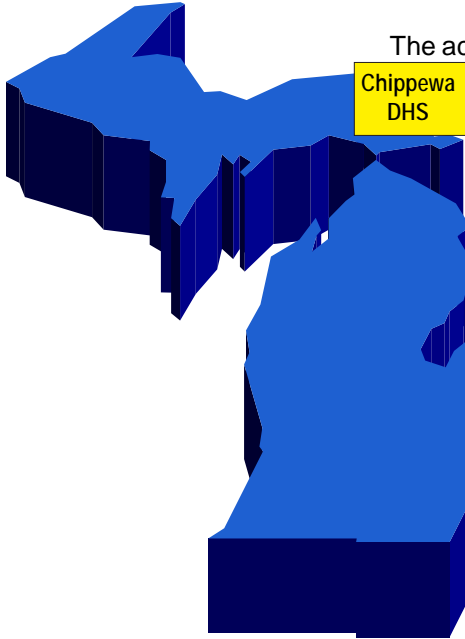
“One more barrier removed,” said Carol Dwan, director of Operations at Bangor Work First.

Donations such as these alarm clocks, hats and mittens from the Doubletree help us to assist our clients without any additional cost to our agency. We appreciate the Doubletree's kindness and willingness to help better the lives of the people that we serve!

Chippewa DHS helps orchestrate local volunteer tax assistance site

From Jennifer Storey, Community Resource Coordinator
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In the fall of 2006, Lake Superior State University (LSSU) accounting students and the Students in Free Enterprise organization teamed up with Chippewa County DHS Volunteer Services Program to develop a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, or VITA, site. VITA volunteers – comprised of accounting and Students In Free Enterprise members – prepare income tax returns and credits for low-income taxpayers and seniors at no charge to tax filers.



The accounting students have enrolled in a special topics course and receive credit while providing this valuable community service. The student group supports this effort through organizing appointments, marketing, public relations, etc. This project has become an excellent example of service learning, bringing together the campus and local residents.

Not only are the students helping individual taxpayers, they are also making a positive financial impact on the area. The Earned Income Tax Credit, one of the credits filed through the program, is often under-claimed by taxpayers.

Essentially, these volunteers are bringing valuable dollars into the local economy benefiting the entire community.

Volunteers began preparing returns on February 6 and will conclude on March 27. Seven student volunteers were trained through the Internal Revenue Service and are directed by an LSSU accounting instructor. An additional professor of business, economics and legal studies serves as an advisor to Students In Free Enterprise. Together these groups partnered with Chippewa County DHS, the IRS, Michigan Department of Treasury, Hiawatha Behavioral Health, Community Action Agency, Sault Tribe of

A cold weather morale warm-up

Berrien County DHS employees held a "Chili Cook-off" on Valentine's Day. The Berrien County DMB – Department of Morale Boosters – had four experienced judges sample all the chili recipes. **Mike Bailey**, pictured right, was awarded first prize with a \$25 gift certificate for his unique bear meat chili recipe. Second place went to **RoseAnn Nicholas**. The chili and baked goods were then purchased by office staff for \$1. Money raised will go toward other employee events throughout the year.

- from **Lee Stults**, Berrien DHS



At left: Judges **Bill Drake**, **Katrina Dzuris**, **Bev Woodson**, **Chuck Filibeck**.

Chippewa Indians, and other human service agencies to orchestrate the project. VITA hopes to process more than 75 returns this filing season with a goal to process even more next year and to develop a local EITC awareness and financial literacy campaign.

Their efforts are truly affecting the lives of area citizens. By serving their community through the skills they are acquiring, VITA volunteers are helping many taxpayers through the stressful process of filing taxes and ultimately putting dollars into the hands of those who need it most. Student volunteers in the program are Jesse Coots, Celina Grondin, Norman Guild, Robert Haske, Stacey Hopp, Jessica LaPonsie, Ronald Ledwell, Megan Smith, Tempest Tillotson, and Ryan Whipple. The faculty volunteers are Profs. Mindy Poliski and Brian Zinser.

Date: March 9
To: DHS Matters!
Subj: Cindy Betz

Cindy Betz came to me with a concern a while ago concerning financial institution data match collections. She noticed that some funds sit on hold due to custodial parents' bad addresses. She asked if we could do some research and utilize our locate resources to try and get this money to the custodial parents and out of the system.

Due to her persistence we implemented some procedures. Cindy's efforts resulted in some very happy custodial parents. As an example, just this past week \$54,000 was on hold for one custodial parent. Cindy worked to locate a good address. Cindy then sent a letter requesting that the custodial parent contact our office. Once the address was properly verified and updated, the custodial parent was able to walk to her mailbox and retrieve her \$54,000 check!

This is just an example of the Central Enforcement Unit not stopping until the money gets to where it is supposed to go. Great work Cindy and thanks to Joan for her locating expertise.

Kim Lubbers, Departmental Manager
DHS Office of Child Support Central Enforcement Unit
Lansing

■ *Both Betz and Lubbers work for Office of Child Support in Lansing. Financial institution data match is a nationwide program where the bank accounts of delinquent child support payers are located and seized for payment toward their cases. "In Cindy's case, her main job is to make sure the money we seize is properly allocated to the correct cases," Lubbers said. "She does this work in conjunction with the Michigan State Disbursement Unit. The example clearly indicates how she takes her job several steps further by not being satisfied until the money gets out of the system and into the hands of custodial parents."*

Date: Feb. 13
To: Ellen Durnan and Duane Wilson
Michigan Department of Human Services
Subj: Responsible Fatherhood Awareness Month

Kudos to you on promoting February 2007 as Responsible Fatherhood Awareness Month (and) the Responsible Fatherhood Awareness celebration on Feb. 16. The Michigan Supreme Court supports efforts to improve children's lives by encouraging parental involvement.

As you know, fathers play a vital role in their children's development. A father's active involvement greatly increases the likelihood that his children will grow up to lead positive lives. Many studies have shown that the children of involved fathers do better socially, academically and psychologically.


Indeed, an involved father is truly a hero, although his heroism is usually recognized only by his children and other family members. Fathers willingly sacrifice some options in their own lives to secure a brighter future for their children. It is not easy to balance commitment to one's children with work, community involvement, and other responsibilities.

Thanks to your work on Responsible Fatherhood Awareness Month, we are reminded how challenging, and yet how essential and rewarding, it is to be a good father. On behalf of the Michigan Supreme Court, I thank you both for helping men to become better fathers. Fathers do matter; they matter enormously.

You should take great pride in knowing that your work benefits the men involved in your programs and, more importantly, their children, who will themselves be better parents because of you. Thank you again for making such a significant contribution to Michigan families.

Daniel J. Wright, Director
Friend of the Court Bureau
State Court Administrative Office
Lansing

■ *Ellen Durnan is a contract manager and program analyst in DHS Office of Child Support, where she manages several fatherhood grants. Duane Wilson is project coordinator of the DHS Healthy Marriage & Responsible Fatherhood Initiatives in DHS Children's Services Administration. Together, they organized the Feb. 16 event in Lansing where First Gentleman Daniel Mulhern and others addressed responsible fatherhood.*



Your letters,
intercepted
and otherwise

DHS Matters! is a product of Michigan's Department of Human Services
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Larry VanDeSande, editor • Submit stories by e-mail to: DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov